

## NATIONAL MINORITIES IN ROMANIA. THEIR PRESENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

*Eckart Wilfried SCHREIBER, Raularian RUSU, and Titus MAN,  
all Cluj-Napoca\**

*with 2 figures in the text*

### CONTENT

Summary .....	439
1 Introduction .....	440
2 Overview .....	441
3 2011 census results .....	441
4 Urban and rural minorities and the relationship between ethnicity and mother tongue .....	443
5 Political representation .....	444
6 Conclusions .....	445
7 References .....	445

### *Summary*

*The paper is based on the comparative data provided by the 2002 and 2011 censuses. One remarks a decrease of the national minorities in numbers from 2,279,436 (2002) to 2,091,883 (2011), and in weight from 10.51% to 10.40%. The analysis includes 20 national minorities, almost all considered as historical ones. While 18 of them decreased, the Gypsies and the Csangos increased in numbers. The changes in the national structure vary according to region. For instance, all counties in Transylvania [Transilvania] (in the broad sense) registered a decline of national minorities, while their numbers increased beyond the Carpathians [Carpații], except for four counties. The ranking of national minorities according to their population did*

---

\* Eckart Wilfried SCHREIBER, PhD. Prof., Raularian RUSU, PhD., Titus MAN, PhD., Faculty for Geography at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Strada Clinicilor 5-7, RO-400006, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; email: wilfried\_schreiber@yahoo.com, rrusu@geografie.ubbcluj.ro, email tman@geografie.ubbcluj.ro

*not change: Hungarians, Gypsies, Ukrainians, Germans and Turks. The Hungarians form a majority in two counties, Harghita (82.9%) and Covasna (71.6%). In other 14 counties (all in Transylvania), the Hungarians are the most important minority. Gypsies rank first among minorities in 25 counties and in Bucharest [București], and they are second in 14 counties. In 18 counties the Gypsy population increased by more than 1,000 people between the two censuses and in two counties their population doubled. The distribution by urban/rural environment shows that Hungarians and Serbs live both in towns and in the countryside, nine minority groups prefer urban areas and other nine rural areas. Historical national minorities are organised in ethnic associations, also considered as political groups because they are represented in the Romanian Parliament. There are 18 Members of Parliament (MPs), one for each ethnic association. Together they form a group which usually supports the Government. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania has more MPs, 27 deputies and 12 senators, and it represents a separate political group.*

## 1 Introduction

While the subject of national minorities was very much debated by geographers, historians, sociologists and others before the First World War and between the two world wars, it was not considered an issue in Communist times, when all people (regardless of their ethnic origin) were officially considered ‘alike’ and Ceaușescu referred often to the national structure as “Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and others” so there was nothing more to say or comment about this.

However, after 1990, Political Geography made its way in Romania and human geographers again showed more interest in the problems related to national minorities, ethnic and religious structures. One remarkable work in this respect was the Atlas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, which included Romania and was edited by Peter JORDAN (1989-2014). Professors Grigor P. POP (1991) and Vasile SURD (1992, 1994) were among the first Romanians to discuss these issues, mainly statistically, based on data available from censuses. POP (2004, 2014) also used the occasion of each census to write an overview paper regarding national minorities in Romania. In the meantime, many took the task of rigourously analysing the national structure at a regional level. For instance, ILIEȘ (1998) wrote about the situation in Crișana, CREȚAN (1999) about Banat, BODOCAN (2001) about Transylvania, SALLANZ (2005, 2009) about Dobruđa [Dobrogea]. Other works were concerned only with one national minority, like KOCSIS & KOCSIS-HODOSI (1995) – about the Hungarians, SCHREIBER (1993, 2001, 2015) – about the Germans, IPATIOV (2001) – about Russians-Lipovanians, and many others. A general overview of the national minorities in Romania was provided by HELLER et al. (2006). Recently, an Electoral Atlas of Romania was published by IAȚU et al. (2014) including information about the ways in which national minorities are represented by parties.

## 2 Overview

After the First World War, in Romania there were censuses in 1930, 1941, 1948, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and 2011. The paper will focus on data from the latest two censuses: 2002 and 2011, especially those regarding the national minorities in Romania.

The censuses are available on the internet. Reference will be made to data provided by the following tables:

- Table 7: Stable population by sex and nationality – by categories of settlements, macroregions, development regions and counties
- Table 8: Stable population by nationality – by counties, cities, towns and municipalities
- Table 9: Stable population by sex and mother tongue – by categories of settlements, macroregions, development regions and counties
- Table 10: Stable population by mother tongue – by counties, cities, towns and municipalities
- Table 11: Stable population by nationality and mother tongue – by categories of settlements
- Table 14: Stable population by nationality and religion – by categories of settlements

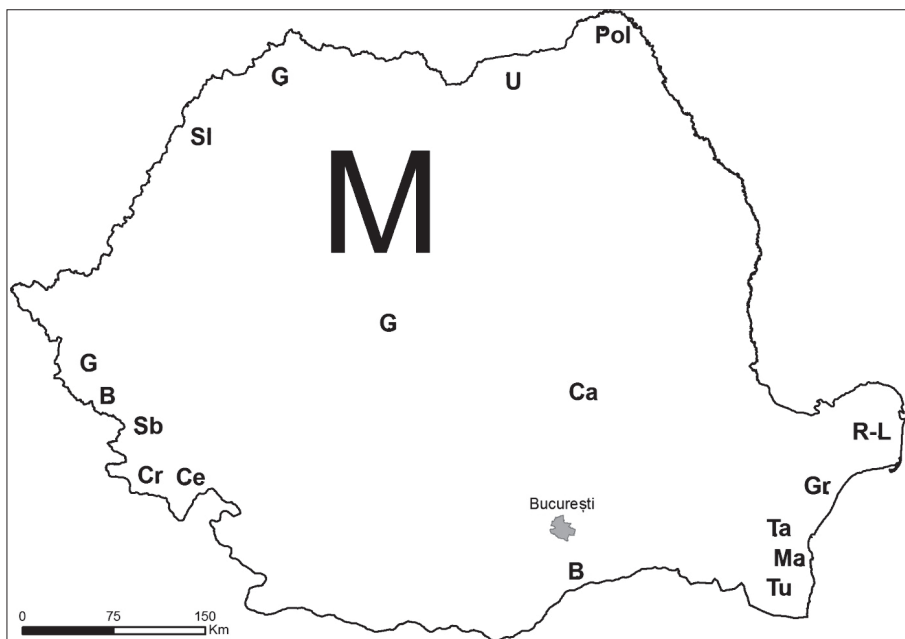
## 3 2011 census results

The results of the 2011 census show that the total population of Romania is 20,121,641 inhabitants. This final figure came out late after the preliminary results indicated a much lower number. Both the preliminary and the final results were largely debated and contested, and the main reason of the differences was the large number of Romanians who live abroad in a more or less permanent manner. The numbers are also curiously linked to the political debates surrounding the 2012 referendum for the president's impeachment, when a quorum of 50%+1 of the total population was required for the referendum to pass. The turnout was 'only' 46.24% of the supposed 18,292,464 registered voters (people aged 18 and above).

Anyway, 16,732,868 people declared themselves as Romanians, while numbers were given for the following national historical minorities: Hungarians, Gypsies, Ukrainians, Germans, Turks, Russians-Lipovanians, Tartars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Italians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Armenians, Csangos, Macedonians, which accounted for at least 1,000 people. Other historical national minorities, like the Rusyns, did not reach the 1,000 people threshold and therefore are not mentioned as such in the census as they are included in the category of 'other minorities'. However,

except for the 'historical' minorities, one national minority exceeded the 1,000 people threshold, the Chinese. The 'other minorities' have all together 18,524 people who live in Romania.

Figure 1: Schematic distribution of national minorities in Romania



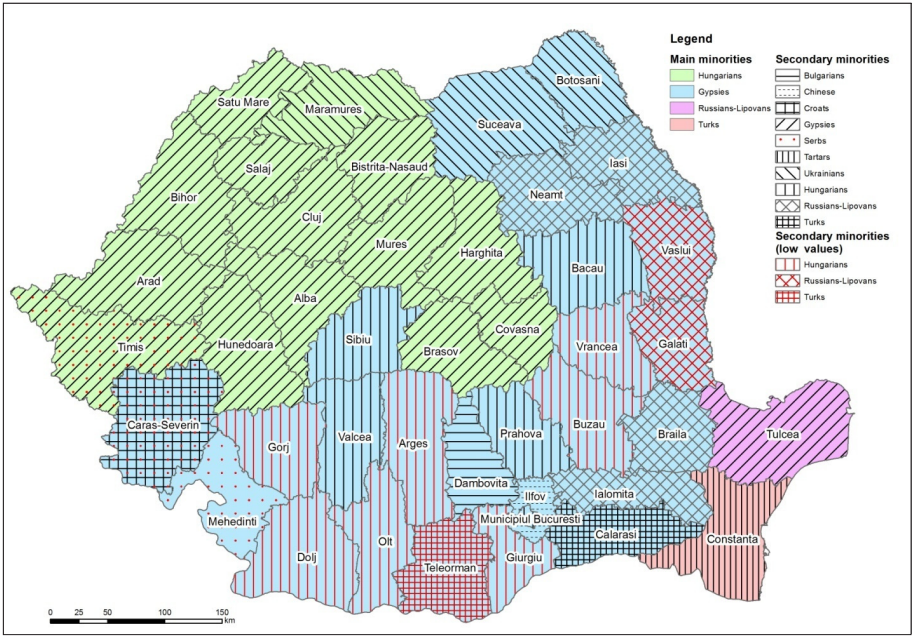
M: Hungarians, G: Germans, U: Ukrainians, Tu: Turks, Ta: Tartars, Sb: Serbs, Sl: Slovaks, R-L: Russians-Lipovanians, Ca: Csangos, Gr: Greeks, B: Bulgarians, Pol: Poles, Ma: Macedonians, Cr: Croats, Ce: Czechs. Gypsies are not represented as they are almost evenly distributed in Romania.

It is interesting to note that information regarding ethnicity is unavailable for 1,236,810 people, an all-time record. This is due to the fact that this census, for the first time, also used personal data from the identity cards for people who were not at home during the census but they have their official permanent residence in Romania. Most of these people were probably abroad at that time and one may even conclude that they should have not been included in the census because most of them live somewhere else on a permanent basis. Nevertheless, the census authorities decided to include them, but their ethnicity remains unknown, as it is not written on their identity cards.

Because of this, the percentage of almost all national groups, including the largest one, that of Romanians, recorded a decrease compared to the 2002 census, as the information is unavailable for more than 6% of the country population.

In 2002, the national minorities represented 10.51% of the total population. In 2011, the national minorities represented only 10.4% of the total population. 17 minorities decreased in absolute and relative numbers and only two minorities increased in numbers: Gypsies and Csangos. The category of ‘other national minorities’ also increased.

Figure 2: **Distribution of main and secondary minorities by county at the 2011 census**



#### 4 Urban and rural minorities and the relationship between ethnicity and mother tongue

Some minorities are predominantly urban while others are predominantly rural. For instance, most of the Armenians (94.9%), Jews (94.5%), Chinese (83.2%), Macedonians (81.0%), Turks (76.6%), Italians (74.8%), Tartars (71.7%), Greeks (71.0%) and Germans (68.6%) live in urban areas of Romania.

On the contrary, Croats (89.5%), Ukrainians (88.8%), Poles (68.6%), Czechs (67.8%), Gypsies (62.9%), Csangos (62.4%), Bulgarians (60.8%), Russians-Lipovans (58.9%) and Slovaks (55.2%) are predominantly located in rural areas.

The Hungarians (51.5% urban, 48.5% rural) and the Serbs (50.2% urban, 49.8% rural) are fairly distributed between the two.

In most cases, the number of people belonging to a national minority is higher than the number of people who have a mother tongue other than Romanian. The number of people belonging to a national minority is lower than the number of people who speak that language as a mother tongue in the case of Hungarians (some of the Jews, Armenians, Gypsies and Germans have Hungarian as their mother tongue) and Chinese (because of people from East and South-East Asia who speak Chinese but do not declare themselves as Chinese).

In many cases, people belonging to national minorities have Romanian as their mother tongue. For instance, many Jews, Armenians and Gypsies have Romanian as their mother tongue. This is also the case of most other national minorities, so the usual case is that the number of people belonging to a national minority is higher than the number of people who speak that language as their mother tongue. This proves the process of advanced assimilation of most national minorities in Romania, especially in the case of smaller national groups, which tend to disappear as their numbers drop from census to census.

## **5 Political representation**

Usually, all national minorities are represented by one political organisation and have one Member of the Parliament (in the Chamber of Deputies, not in the Senate). Some minorities have more than one political organisation: Hungarians 3, Bulgarians 2, Serbs 1 of their own + 1 with the Krashovanians, Gypsies – several.

The Hungarian national minority, which is the largest one, includes both Hungarians and Szeklers (who usually declare themselves as Hungarians). They have three political organisations: The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, The Hungarian Civic Party and the Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania.

The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania is represented in the Senate, in the Chamber of Deputies and was many times in the Romanian Government as it always had more than 5% of the votes (the threshold imposed to all parties to enter the Parliament). It has prefects, mayors, elected county and local councillors.

The main interest of the Hungarian parties is focused on the Szekler Land [Ținutul Secuiesc/Székelyföld] and its status as well as the double citizenship of ethnic Hungarians.

Each of the other national historical minorities has one Member of Parliament (MP) in the Chamber of Deputies. Together, the MPs of the minorities form a parliamentary group of their own, usually supporting the government. The political parties of the

minorities also have a low number of mayors, county and local councillors in those parts where they live in higher numbers.

At the 2014 Romanian presidential elections there were 14 candidates, out of which three belonged to the national minorities (two Hungarians and one German). The German candidate, Klaus Werner Iohannis, entered the second round of elections, supported by a right-wing political alliance, ACL (Christian-Liberal Alliance). He won the elections and therefore, for the first time in history, Romania has a president who belongs to a national minority.

## 6 Conclusions

One remarks a decrease of the national minorities in numbers from 2,279,436 (2002) to 2,091,883 (2011), and in weight from 10.51% to 10.40%. The analysis includes 20 national minorities, almost all considered as historical ones. While 18 of them decreased, the Gypsies and the Csangos increased in numbers. The changes in the national structure vary according to region. For instance, all counties in Transylvania (in the broad sense) registered a decline of national minorities, while their numbers increased beyond the Carpathians, except for four counties. The ranking of the national minorities according to their population did not change: Hungarians, Gypsies, Ukrainians, Germans and Turks. The Hungarians form a majority in two counties, Harghita (82.9%) and Covasna (71.6%). In other 14 counties (all in Transylvania), the Hungarians are the most important minority. Gypsies rank first among minorities in 25 counties and in Bucharest, and they are second in 14 counties. In 18 counties the Gypsy population increased by more than 1,000 people between the two censuses and in two counties their population doubled. The distribution by urban/rural environment shows that Hungarians and Serbs live both in towns and in the countryside, nine minority groups prefer urban areas and other nine rural. The strongest political association belonging to minorities is the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania, which has several MPs and is usually part of the coalition government.

## 7 References

- BODOCAN V. (2001), *Etnie, confesiune și comportament electoral în Transilvania*. Studiu Geografic. Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- CREȚAN R. (1999), *Etnie, confesiune și comportament electoral în Banat*, Studiu Geografic (Sfârșitul sec. al XIX-lea și sec. al XX-lea). Timișoara, Tipografia Universitatea de Vest.
- HELLER W., JORDAN P., KAHL T., SALLANZ J. (eds.) (2006), *Ethnizität in der Transformation. Zur Situation nationalen Minderheiten in Rumänien* (= Wiener Osteuropa Studien, 21). Wien, LIT Verlag.



- ILIEȘ AL. (1998), *Etnie, confesiune și comportament electoral în Crișana și Maramureș (Sfârșitul sec. XIX și sec. XX)*. Cluj-Napoca, Edit. Dacia.
- IĂȚU C. (ed.) (2014), *Atlasul electoral al României: 1990-2009*. Iași, Edit. Univ. Al. I. Cuza.
- IPATIOV F. (2001), *Rușii-lipoveni din România. Studiu de Geografie Umană*. Cluj-Napoca, Edit. Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- JORDAN P. (ed.) (1989-2014), *Atlas Ost- und Südosteuropa*. Stuttgart, Borntraeger.
- KOCSIS K., KOCSIS-HODOSI E. (1995), *Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin: a study in ethnic Geography*. Toronto, Matthias Corvinus.
- POP GR.P. (1991), *The National Structure of Romania's Population (= Studia UBB, Geographia, 2)*. Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press.
- POP GR.P. (2004), *Structura etnică a populației României, în anul 2002*. In: *Revista Română de Geografie Politică*, VI, 1-2, pp. 17-34.
- POP GR.P., RUSU R. (2014), *The National Structure of the Romanian Population at the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 Census (= Studia UBB, Geographia, 1)*. Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press.
- SALLANZ J. (2005), *Die Dobrudscha: Ethnische Minderheiten – Kulturlandschaft – Transformation. Ergebnisse eines Geländekurses im Südosten Rumäniens (= Praxis Kultur- und Sozialgeographie, 35)*. Potsdam, Universitätsverlag.
- SALLANZ J. (2009), *Die Dobrudscha – ein neuer Grenzraum der Europäischen Union. Sozioökonomische, ethnische, politisch-geographische und ökologische Probleme (= Südosteuropa-Studien, 76)*. München, Verlag Otto Sagner.
- SCHREIBER E.W. (1993), *Demographische Entwicklungen bei den Rumäniendeutschen (= Südosteuropa Mitteilungen, 3)*. München, Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft.
- SCHREIBER E.W. (2001), *Minoritatea germană din România și evoluția numerică a acesteia*. In: *Studii și cercetări de Geografie*, XLVII-XLVIII, pp. 83-89.
- SCHREIBER E.W. (2015), *Die deutsche Minderheit in Rumänien heute. Demographische Entwicklung und Herausforderungen (= Studia Germanica Napocensia, 3)*. Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- SURD V. (1992), *Evoluția numerică și structura etnică a populației României în lumina datelor Recensământului din 7 ianuarie 1992 (= Analele Universității din Timișoara, seria Geografie, I)*. Timișoara.
- SURD V. (1994), *Structura etnică și religioasă a populației din România (= Geographica Timisensis, Universitatea din Timișoara, III)*. Timișoara.